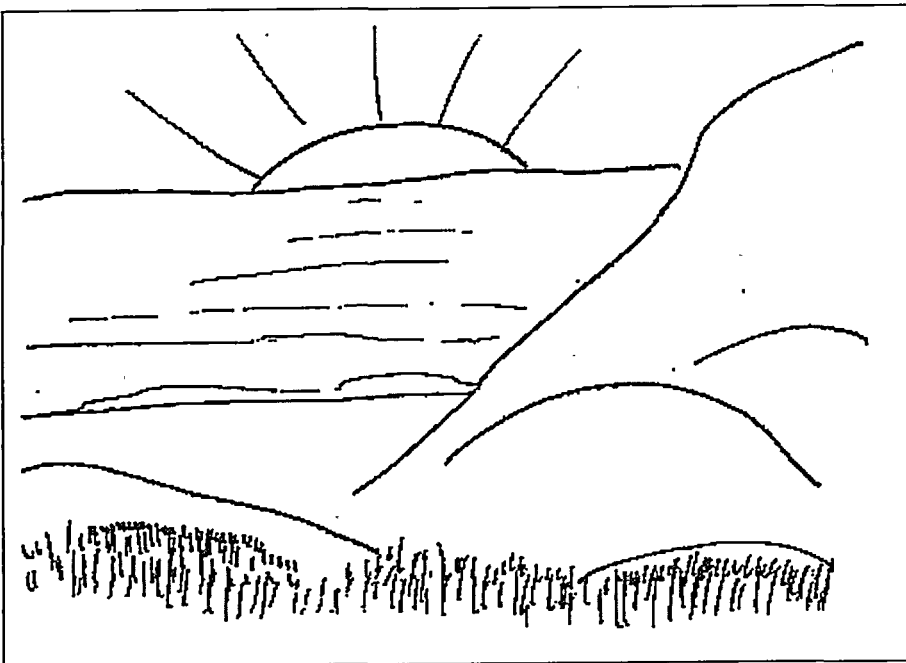


what can teacher-librarians do to promote their work and the school library media program? **the terrain**

THE MESA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT IN ARIZONA WANTS TO CUT COSTS WITHOUT CUTTING STUDENT INSTRUCTION. WITH HELP FROM A LOCAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE, PARAPROFESSIONALS ARE TRAINED TO REPLACE CERTIFIED LIBRARIANS WHOSE ROLES ARE DESCRIBED IN THE PRESS AS, "CHECKING OUT MATERIALS, MANAGING THE RESOURCES, ORDERING BOOKS, AND PROVIDING SERVICES FOR STAFF [AND] STUDENTS." PERHAPS IF THIS IS ALL THAT THE CERTIFIED LIBRARIANS ARE DOING, THEN MESA MADE THE RIGHT DECISION.

FIGURE 1



by jenny robins

In the classroom, students acquire knowledge and skills in subject areas like communication arts, social studies, science, and math. But the knowledge and skills needed for the future will be very different from those acquired in the present. These might provide a background, but in order to actively pursue knowledge, the information literacy skills acquired through instruction by a certified library media specialist or teacher-librarian are essential.

A school library should be the place where students are taught to recognize when they need information. They learn to ask and answer the question "Is this the information I need?" They consider the impact of sharing the information with others. The school librarian teaches children how to retrieve information when it is needed, how to judge its worth, and how to use it to enrich their lives and the lives of others.

The quantity of information available today holds the promise of increasing knowledge, but to untrained minds, the information landscape lacks distinction. The librarian sees the contours (Figure 1). There are forms equivalent to mountains, like the media giants who broadcast their messages and mega publishers whose products fill newsstands. There are hills representing the myriad of small publishing businesses that make information available for a price. There are fields of public opinion that appear as blogs and websites. There are deep oceans of information available in the

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hidden Web that require expensive tools and extensive training to access.

In the school library, students are trained to navigate these terrains. Young children learn to tell fiction from nonfiction. As they grow, they learn that information comes in text, in music, and in art. They learn to look for bias and think about the credibility of the sources they use. They learn to create trails that guide others to useful resources. By high school, students are introduced to major issues of our day like issues related to intellectual property and copyright laws. They learn to ask questions that are vital to a democracy, like, "What constitutes credibility and authority?"

This is not the time to remove this instruction from our schools. We cannot

turn the clock back two or three decades and pretend children can succeed in college and careers with the canon of knowledge taught in their communication arts, social studies, science, and math classes. Instead they must be taught, be encouraged, and be motivated to become active learners and expert users of information.

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ADULT BOOKS FOR OLDER TEENS

SOLDIERS—THEN (Note: Due to strong language and subject matter, books are suggested for grades 11 and 12.)

Grace under fire: Letters of faith in times of war. Andrew Carroll, ed. Doubleday, 2007. \$16.95. 978-0-385-51974-8. Containing correspondence from the American Revolution to the War on Terrorism being fought today, this book is a moving collection of personal letters that inspire readers with their testament to courage, patriotism, strength, and faith.

Hell hath no fury: True stories of women at war from antiquity to Iraq. Rosalind Miles and Robin Cross. Random House, 2008. \$14.95. 978-0-307-34637-7. This engrossing compendium presents fascinating, little known information about women and war. Overviews and specific biographical information cover every type of female involvement during wartime, including commanders, spies, doctors, and news correspondents.

Heroes: U.S. Army Medal of Honor recipients. Barrett Tillman. Penguin, 2006. \$26.95. 978-0-425-21017-8. From the Civil War to Somalia, this well written overview presents the Medal of Honor in a historical perspective. Interspersed with stories of the medal's recipients are historical sidebars and black and white photographs. The tales of courage found here are both interesting and inspiring.

Indestructible: The unforgettable story of a Marine hero at the battle of Iwo Jima. Jack H. Lucas with D. K. Drum. Da Capo Press, 2006. \$22.95. 978-0-306-81470-9. Fourteen-year-old Lucas left home, enlisted in the Marines, and was on Iwo Jima three years later. The youngest Marine in history to receive the Medal of Honor, Lucas tells a riveting story of war and bravery.



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